

**Zahid against repeal of Sedition Act, set for collision with Najib**  
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**BY MD IZWAN**

Home Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said he would not support abolishing the Sedition Act 1948, putting him on collision course with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak.

In July last year, Najib had announced that the Sedition Act would be replaced with a National Harmony Act, after repealing the Internal Security Act and the Emergency Ordinance.

However, Zahid told reporters today that the abolishment of the Sedition Act would mean that there was no law to regulate seditious content.

"It would legitimise sedition, whether it was in the form of slander, accusation, condemnation, it would be encouraged," Zahid said.

His objection sets up another collision within the government, after BN members criticised the proposed tabling of the Administration of Islamic Law (Federal Territories) Amendment Bill 2013.

Najib, in an interview with BBC World News on Tuesday, had defended the use of the Sedition Act but reiterated his pledge made almost a year ago to change it.

"We will amend the Sedition Act, but at the same time, there are certain provisions that will ensure Malaysia will continue to be a country that's peaceful and harmonious," he was quoted as saying.

Zahid did not echo those thoughts, saying both the ISA and EO had been abolished previously due to demands.

He also drew parallels to the alleged rise in the crime rate following the abolition of the EO saying whatever the demands, police should have the power to enforce the law.

"This includes when the EO was abolished, look at the situation in Malaysia now, the crime rate is increasing," Zahid said.

He said the structure of the new law to replace the Emergency Ordinance would be decided by the police and the Attorney-General's Chambers.

He added the views and opinions of various groups and quarters would be sought and deliberated over to ensure that there was no dispute once it had been passed. "Dialogues will be held with various non-governmental organisations, individuals and the public to get their feedback, views, input and comments so that it is acceptable to everyone."

Zahid was speaking to reporters shortly after flagging off the Queen Street convoy at Utusan Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur this morning.

"The new law will emphasise the protection and safety of the Malaysian people and at the same time, provide police with the authority to enforce it.

"For me, the main aim of the ministry, and the police in particular, is to maintain public order."

On Thursday, Zahid revealed that the first draft of the new law to replace the EO was now with the Attorney-General's Chambers.

The Home Minister said the government had agreed to introduce the new law following an increase in crime following the repealing of preventive laws.

The Opposition had slammed the police previously for using the repealing of preventive laws as an excuse for the rising crime rate.

Instead, Pakatan Rakyat said the main reason for the increase in crime was abuse of power by authorities.

Putrajaya had revealed between 2009 and 2012, the national crime index had dropped by 27 per cent while street crimes decreased by 39.7 per cent.

Police also claimed that the crime index had dropped by six per cent for the first quarter of 2013 but the figure was challenged by several groups. R. Sri Sanjeevan of crime watchdog MyWatch said both Putrajaya and the police kept telling the public that crime was just a perception. Police have been accused of doctoring statistics and also not classifying certain cases under the crime index. - July 6, 2013.

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